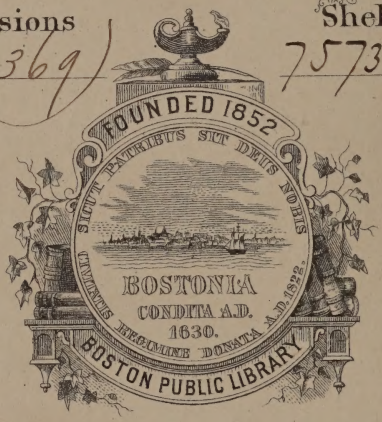
BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 08630 030 6

65

Accessions
17.369
Shelf No.
7573.34


Received May 23, 1890

32605

Isaac Mansfield

ADDRESS

DELIVERED TO THE

MASSACHUSETTS PEACE SOCIETY,

AT THEIR THIRD ANNIVERSARY

DECEMBER 25, 1818.

By ANDREW RITCHIE, Esq.

Published at the request of the Society.

BOSTON:
PRINTED BY WELLS AND LILLY.
.....
1819.

MAY 23 1890
17369

ADDRESS, &c.

It is remarkable, that the establishment of associations for the abolition of the greatest scourge of the human race, should have been deferred to this late period of society. Wisdom has not followed experience. Successive nations have been aggressors in war, and at length become its victims; have gathered its spoils, and at length become prostrated under them; have acquired glory in arms, merely to impart it in turn to their conqueror. History has transmitted the bloody records of all ages without conveying their instruction. Generations have left to posterity their passions and follies, without communicating the lesson derived from their sufferings and calamities. The last century has, perhaps, witnessed more destruction than any preceding one. Science has lent its aid in furnishing new engines for war, and the increased wealth of society has contributed new resources. There is an advancement in the military art, which makes the combats of antiquity appear to be acts of vulgar outrage.

These tragedies have not been acted in vain, if their moral has been felt; and Providence has at length suffered human blood to flow in such torrents, that mankind seem now to be affected with disgust. Since the late peace in Europe, there ap-

pears to have been a simultaneous impression in many countries, that an effort ought to be made to suppress totally, or at least to render less frequent, the resort to arms for the determination of controversies between states.

Such efforts are not, as many suppose, the impracticable suggestions of humanity; but are founded on rational views of our nature, and may hope for success. When it is considered, that the aggressor in every war acts from an erroneous motive of interest, or a delusive passion for glory, is it not within the province of reason, to correct the error and dispel the delusion? Is it impracticable to produce a conviction, that force is not justice; and that a conquest, though dearly purchased, conveys no right? May not a nation anticipate before a war, what it usually laments afterwards? While it is admitted, that wars have their origin in human passions, we cannot allow the argument of those, who say these passions cannot be controlled. What means have ever been taken to control them? Society, on the contrary, has in every period made efforts to enkindle them by its rewards and distinctions. It is true, that society during peace, while it fosters military spirit, restrains it from action; but it is excited by this restraint, like the furious mastiff, which becomes more fierce when the chain which bound him is removed. Had the same efforts been made against the custom of war, which have been successful against other customs no more unreasonable, beneficial results would have been effected; nay, had the same attempts been made to inspire pacific principles, as have been made to excite those of jealousy and hostility, it is probable the ambition of men would have inclined to enterprizes of peace.

The first objects that seize the attention of our youth are military shows. The ornaments of dress and the glitter of arms prepossess the mind, before it can comprehend for what use they are designed; and the child is attracted by a parade more powerfully, than by any spectacle which society presents. It is at this time his ambition attaches itself to what appears so gorgeous and splendid. This disposition is fostered by education. Books abounding in imagery succeed in fixing the impression produced by the pageantry of life. The young mind full of emotion, and eager to look abroad into nature, which is new to it, has no love for abstraction. Works of moral sentiment can hold no competition with the high resounding verse, where are seen heroes who contend for glory, and all the feelings of pity, of exultation, and of terror, are under the command of genius. The youth, before he has an opportunity of knowing the world, falls in love with the creatures of the poet's fancy. It is said the reading of Homer gave the first impulse to the ruling passion of Alexander. The Iliad has thus, not only fixed the standard of epic verse, but formed the ideal model of its hero, to the imitative race of poets in all subsequent ages. Their characters are thought to be tame, unless they have something of the ruffian about them; and the christian poets of the present day, who are the most admired, when they intend to attach an uncommon interest to a personage, select his morals from a pagan code. So in nature, the classic imagination loves to range in scenes, where cultivation has made no changes, and the persons who inhabit them have a sublimity equally original and rude.

In addition to the partiality for military qualities produced by the sentiments of past ages, these qualities at all times derive an interest from the occasions on which they are exercised. When are honors bestowed so liberally, as on those who conduct the national force? When the iron gates of war are thrown open, how distinguished is the man, who marches forward as the public champion! In remote ages, heroes after their death were ranked among the divinities. At a later period, the triumphal procession, the highest honor of the state was reserved, not to the legislator and judge, though he were Cato; nor to the consul, though like Cicero he might be called the father of his country; but to the soldier, who came home laden with spoil. In modern times, and in England (which I select because civilization has there made great advance) was gratitude ever expressed toward the philosopher or the statesman, as it has been toward illustrious generals? The princely palace was not intended to mark the spot where Newton was born, nor where Milton or Locke was buried. The lofty arch and the colossal statue proclaim to a distance the glory of the soldier for whom they were erected. But, to discover the memorial of the poet, the moralist, or the divine, who blessed his country by his genius and virtue, you must retire into the solitude of a cloister, and there find a modest tomb. We all remember the interest we took in the leaders of the European armies, who lately fought and conquered, in a cause, which we then believed, and still believe, righteous and just. They appeared at the side of their sovereigns, when they visited the countries whose safety they had secured, and were received

with equal honors. Chieftains of ruder virtue nad more uncultivated life, were caressed with the fondest attentions of the most polished society. It is ungrateful to complain of this. Far be it from me, to wish that a nation, as soon as peace is secured, should turn away its eyes from those on whom it looked anxiously in the hour of peril; that the only emotion at the mention of their names should rise when the breast is agitated by personal alarm. Let the people bestow just honors liberally. But let them not cast the rays of public favour principally on martial merit, and throw into the shade the arts which promote the dignity, virtue and tranquillity of life, and give to society all that is worth defending.

Another mode in which military spirit is cultivated, is the establishment of standing armies. In times of tranquillity an army is a mere show, and all its serious business is only parade. Such occupation cannot give full satisfaction to men who are ambitious of displaying the virtues of the soldier, and the talents that are attested in real action, and not in fictitious combats. These talents and virtues lose their object on the recurrence of peace; and the estimation in which they are generally held, diminishes as the occasion of exercising them passes away. Society then, in the establishment of standing armies, has placed men in a situation where the highest and most honourable feelings must receive their gratification from a state of war. Every inducement which can arise from advancement in rank, creates in a standing army and those connected with it, a preference for actual service. The augmentation of the forces then required, together

with the vacancies occasioned by the losses of war, excite the principal hope of promotion. We know how feeble is the excitement, how tardy is the hope of the subaltern, when the ranks above him are made vacant only by the casualties of peace and the infirmities of age. Let me not be supposed to insinuate, that the duties of a good soldier in time of peace are incompatible with the obligations of a good citizen. We know too many examples to the contrary, to admit the charge; many, who would discourage every excitement to unnecessary war, though it might contribute to their personal advantage. But still, it is an unhappy necessity which requires an order, that has an interest in any degree at variance with the public tranquillity. In our country, the establishment is so inconsiderable, and dispersed over so extensive a territory, that no injurious influence can be perceived. But, when the expediency of any large augmentation shall be considered, let this tendency not be disregarded. The jealousies between other orders and occupations are sufficiently wakeful in our national councils. We have heard much of the agricultural interest, the manufacturing and commercial interests; and mutual suspicion has been entertained by different sections of the country, lest one should encroach on the other in the partiality of government. But that which has been predominant in other countries, is the military interest. An army raised ostensibly for external defence, is made an instrument to enforce the power of government. There is a sympathy between the prince and his army. An introduction to court is freely granted to military officers, and the application of the royal favour has

been so partial, that their profession has continued to be most honourable; and in France, before the revolution, the higher ranks were chiefly filled by the nobility. When a monarch is surrounded by half a million of troops, ambitious of distinction, and too jealous of the dignity of their country, to suffer the smallest provocation to pass without apology and retribution, is it surprising that peace cannot be preserved? When Frederick II. found himself in the command of the finest army in Europe, with a treasury adequate to supply it, it was impracticable for him to remain at peace. His own feelings and the merits of his troops demanded, that they should not remain inactive. Concession would not have satisfied him; it would have given him only the fruits of conquest—his principal ambition was the fame of achieving it.

Society in another way encourages a predilection for military life. An army is never suffered to appear with the associations that belong to it. The idea of danger and disaster is studiously concealed. The exterior presents only images calculated to inspire pride and exultation. This is a wise provision, so far as it is intended to excite the confidence of the soldier, and give animation to the public; but is unhappy, so far as it imposes a false impression, and draws a veil over the miseries inseparable from battle. What spectacle does the world exhibit so gorgeous and animating, as that of a grand review preparatory to war? What sensations possess the mind, but those of resistless force? Masses of men, shining in the splendor of arms, made beautiful by all the arts of decoration, all moving by one impulse, and varying their form by a thousand graceful evolu-

tions. The nodding plumes, the banners floating on the air, the martial music, the changing radiance gleaming from ten thousand polished weapons, throw a charm on the senses, and suppress reflection. Here is seen no association with carnage. We witness no stain of blood. It is a sight which delights every age and sex. The tender female, who would shudder at the image of death, looks on this sight without forboding apprehension. Society does not dress things so, when it intends to "denote them truly." Whatever else has so near an alliance with mortality appears in other colours. The hearse is hung round with weeds, and the cemetery exhibits mementos of sombre import; yet the destroying spirit has scarcely a closer connexion with these, than with such an army. As long as the custom of war prevails, it is necessary that the public eye should be thus amused. Were the mind suffered to anticipate consequences, to connect the end with the means, to join the field of battle to the field of parade, the latter would lose all its attraction.

We have considered *some* of the means by which a partiality in favour of arms is cherished. In order to promote the abolition of war, let these means be counteracted. If war be an evil, let the extent of it be shown; and if it be not a necessary evil, mankind may be induced to make an effort to avoid it. The world improves in its usages in proportion as it is enlightened. Barbarous practices recede from civilized life, as reason and religion advance. War is the last and most stubborn, but must be obliged to follow in the train of the others. Look back on Europe a thousand years ago, peopled by the same race of men as ourselves. How many cruel, unjust

and idolatrous usages then prevailed, which had the same hold on men's minds, that war has on ours. These have been abolished, because they were successively discovered to be unreasonable. Shall we say, that society can make no further advance; that reason can exercise no more power over error? The christian has the assurance of prophecy against this position, and the philanthropist can appeal to all the analogies of the mind.

The sentiment in favour of the military profession has no stronger support, than that in favour of other occupations. There is no natural partiality for the sword. No generous soldier has a delight in destroying life. Arms are honoured, only because they are supposed important to society. Necessity is the word that justifies what is naturally abhorrent. Let the reason of men be disabused, and the value attached to military habits would cease. There have been changes as great as this, in the opinion of men respecting other occupations. Nations calling themselves enlightened, have discouraged the free citizen from the pursuits of agriculture and manufactures as degrading. Commerce among the Romans was interdicted to people of honour and family. In the dark ages it was decreed in a general council, that trade was incompatible with the christian character, and that no man could practice the law with a safe conscience. Is there any prejudice then so firmly fixed in public opinion, that we should despair of removing it?

Let men be persuaded to avoid war by considering the extent of the evil. It is indefinite. When nations resort to it, it is the intention to produce the greatest practicable degree of injury. In the soft

and abstract language of civilians, it is to weaken the power of an enemy. But this is effected by laying waste his fields, by sacking his cities and destroying their inhabitants. The power of man is vast, when directed to the purpose of destruction. The fabric of a nation's prosperity, raised by the toilsome operation of many years of industry, may be levelled at a blow. The devastation effected by an army, is but faintly represented by those natural calamities that fill the mind with so much dread. The earthquake, that opens the ground under the devoted city, the pestilence, that silently bears away its inhabitants, or the flood that rushes over the plain, these all produce but partial misery. They have afforded only hints to be improved upon by a nation, when it combines all its force for a display of its resentment.

To us, who remember some details of the last war in Europe, it is unnecessary to describe scenes, which it is the object of war to produce. Armies are collected of men who have lived peacefully a thousand miles apart, who have never injured each other, and feel no hostility ; but for purposes of state, of which they are ignorant, meet on the same ground to drench it with their blood and cover it with their bodies. Here " war strips his face of all disguise." In view of the pitying heavens, that shine benignantly on all, men exhibit a spectacle that has no resemblance, but in the regions below. Enveloped in smoke, they distinguish each other only in the blaze of the cannon ; the dying and the dead are trampled on indiscriminately by friends and foes, and shouts and groans mingle and form the general clamour. It was in contemplating the dis-

asters of such a battle, that the greatest commander of the present age acknowledged, that the glory of the victory produced a poor consolation for the losses in acquiring it.

We hear it constantly allowed, that war is a great evil, but unhappily it is necessary. Why necessary? The answer is, because there is no umpire to settle the disputes of nations. But, it may be affirmed, there never have been any such disputes which could not have been adjusted without recourse to war, had both parties felt a proper aversion for it. There have been instances of conflicting claims, insisted on by both with equal sincerity. But the principles of public law are now so ably illustrated by eminent jurists, whose authority is every where recognized, that the reciprocal duties and obligations of states are generally well established. Should, however, any question arise, where principle and not passion is involved, there can be no objection, in a just government, to submit it to the decision of an independent tribunal. The practicability of this measure has been repeatedly evinced; particularly in the Congress lately assembled in Europe. We trust this is an example, that will recommend itself by its beneficial results. Formerly, the meeting of sovereigns was dreaded like the conjunction of evil planets; their real design was not to form a union for peace, but a coalition for more powerful war. If the object of a national claim is sincerely justice, friendly discussion and the mediation of a third power are the natural modes of promoting it. As long as these can avail, no nation that has been sufficiently enlightened to abolish the trial by judicial combat in the litigation of indi-

viduals, can offer an apology for resorting to arms in its own cause. Heaven, to which the appeal is pretended in both instances, has never condescended to be the arbiter. No; it is not on questions of principle, that nations usually contend. The alleged pretences are seldom the real motives. One party is in the wrong, and he generally knows it. He commences hostilities, or opposes by force from policy; because he imagines that war, with the prospect of glory and success, is preferable to concession to just demand. Let the friends of peace expose this delusion, and their wish will be accomplished. Let the miseries of war darken the splendor of its false glories. Let men feel, that a power, which seizes or withholds the rights of another, and will neither yield to discussion nor mediation, fights with dishonoured arms. Battle ought indeed to be the last resort of kings; and never hazarded but when the motto of the royal escutcheon, "God and my right," shall truly justify it.

We are in the habit of attributing wars principally to rulers, and not to the people. But the truth is, there is no monarch so despotic as not to be controlled by the public opinion. A military prince cannot indulge his propensity, without infusing a military spirit among his subjects. Unless they express gratification in martial display, his animation will become faint.

Let the friends of peace then appeal to the people, whose ear is more accessible than that of sovereigns. Let them be convinced that a delight in martial preparation is a pleasure which they purchase too dearly. The poor inhabitant of a remote retreat, who listens with enthusiasm to the recital of

the exploits of his countrymen, and associates himself in interest with those who never regarded him, discovers a patriotism which we cannot but esteem. The common throng, who hear of great actions, and imagine that the lustre they see at a distance on other heads, shines also upon theirs, discover a sentiment for which it is hard to condemn them. Let them be better informed, and know that the country which they love, demands their zeal only for its rights, its liberties and its happiness; and that those who excite it in behalf of their own personal renown, impose on their affections and betray their interest.

Let the friends of peace represent war as a great evil, but not as the greatest; there is one greater—the loss of essential rights and national independence. I am aware that I differ from men whom I highly respect. But the doctrine, that no resistance by force is to be made to violence, is opposed to the natural impulse of self-preservation, and I should despair of obtaining a general union of good men on such terms. I could not admit a sentiment, that would induce me to cast reproach on the best deeds recorded in history; and to take the laurel from the brows of that list of heroes, beginning with Miltiades and Epaminondas, and ending with Washington, who saved, and whose only ambition was, to save their country. When we see the world filled with nations which are restrained from aggression only because it will be opposed by force, we ought to consider, whether we promote peace by denying the use of force. Should we not increase the temptation to hostilities, by removing the principal ground of apprehension from the mind of the aggressor? Does not the argument of the friends of peace lose much of its weight by

the admission of this doctrine? We urge the duty of cultivating peace, and the guilt of provoking war, by recounting the horrors and disasters of that calamity; but the doctrine of non-resistance, should it be embraced by a nation, would give its invader all the advantages of conquest, and protect him from its evils.

Human and divine laws equally appeal to the sentiment of fear; because it is known that men cannot be restrained without it. There is no reason for supposing that nations should regard the rights of each other, unless influenced by the same motive; and this arises only from the expectation of resistance by force. However numerous wars have been, this apprehension has undoubtedly operated to prevent many which would otherwise have taken place. Let this salutary apprehension be continued. Peace will still be the greatest blessing of every nation, and war its greatest scourge. We may then hope to multiply in all parts of the world the number of those who shall, on every principle of humanity and religion, labour to counteract the excitements to national hostility. The statesman then will receive most honour, who by a magnanimous policy, shall preserve the prosperity of the state from foreign collision; and the general will have most merit, who, willing to devote his own life to his country, shall look for his triumph in the virtues and tranquillity of peace.

THE END.

Boston Public Library
Central Library, Copley Square

Division of
Reference and Research Services

The Date Due Card in the pocket indicates the date on or before which this book should be returned to the Library.

Please do not remove cards from this pocket.

(June, 1889, 20,000)

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY.

One volume allowed at a time, and obtained only by card; to be kept 14 days (or seven days in the case of fiction and juvenile books published within one year) without fine; not to be renewed; to be reclaimed by messenger after 21 days, who will collect 20 cents besides fine of 2 cents a day, including Sundays and holidays; not to be lent out of the borrower's household, and not to be transferred; to be returned at this Hall.

Borrowers finding this book mutilated or unwarrantably defaced, are expected to report it; and also any undue delay in the delivery of books.

*** No claim can be established because of the failure of any notice, to or from the Library, through the mail.

The record below must not be made or altered by borrower.